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Self-Regulation in English, a lesson

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Module 9 Learning Activities for Self-Regulation ****ENGLISH****

by Robert F. Bergstrom

The cards you have been given reproduce, sentence by sentence, a paper written at the level of an "average" college freshman. Put aside, for the moment, any comments you might make on the style of the paper. Instead, focus on the sentences themselves and their function in the paper.

I. Arrange the cards you have into piles which represent categories of function within a paper. We're not interested at this point in where the sentence would occur in the paper but in what it would do, let's say, in a paragraph in which it would logically occur. In the space below, label your categories somehow and briefly describe them.

When you have finished, share your findings with the instructor. If time allows, the whole class will share the findings of each group.

II. Now take the cards and attempt to make from them the full paper as you think it ought to read. When you have finished, compare the function of the sentences in the essay you've constructed with your judgment of function in the categories above. If there are differences, how do you account for them?

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We are faced with violence in the home, violence in the streets, violence on airplanes and in supposedly religious communities, and violence in war.

Many leaders, including religious men, say that we are living in the most violent time the world has ever seen.

Hardly a day goes by that we do not read or hear about some terrible act of violence.

They predict doom if we do not change our ways quickly.

They may be right.

The difference is that we think about violence much more because of newspapers and television, which remind us constantly of the terrible things that are done around the world.

But is it true that this is the most violent time in the history of the world?

It is difficult to compare the violence in our society with that in previous ones because we do a much better job of keeping track of victims of violence in our day.

We know that very ancient people were savages who lived by the law of the jungle--the survival of the strongest.

We can, however, make some guesses about the violence of the people of the past from what we know about them.

Not all of the Greeks walked around in white robes listening to philosophers.

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Many of them glorified the honor of killing enemies in war.

Even the Egyptians, who were civilized, kept and abused slaves and committed other acts of violence that we know of.

The Romans, also very civilized, waged wars constantly.

And in our own history, we made heroes of men who killed one another with six-guns.

Closer to our own time, we find the English, the French, and the Spanish fighting wars with one another nearly all the time.

Poor people were killed for taking a rabbit or deer from a rich man's land.

Others were burned alive as witches or hung and cut open with swords.

And their laws were cruel.

Charles Dickens talks about children being hung for picking pockets only a hundred years ago.

I do not think we have more violence today than countries had in past years.

Maybe it is a good thing that we worry about violence more now, even if there isn't more of it, because serious thinking about violence may help us avoid it in the future.

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III. You will find below the essay as the student wrote it. What differences do you find between this version and yours? Which do you prefer, and why?

We are faced with violence in the home, violence in the streets, violence on airplanes and in supposedly religious communities, and violence in war. Many leaders, including religious men, say that we are living in the most violent time the world has ever seen. Hardly a day goes by that we do not read or hear about some terrible act of violence. They predict doom if we do not change our ways quickly. They may be right. The difference is that we think about violence much more because of newspapers and television, which remind us constantly of the terrible things that are done around the world.

But is it true that this is the most violent time in the history of the world? It is difficult to compare the violence in our society with that in previous ones because we do a much better job of keeping track of victims of violence in our day. We know that very ancient people were savages who lived by the law of the jungle--the survival of the strongest. We can, however, make some guesses about the violence of the people of the past from what we know about them. Not all of the Greeks walked around in white robes listening to philosophers. Many of them glorified the honor of killing enemies in war. Even the Egyptians, who were civilized, kept and abused slaves and committed many other acts of violence that we know of. The Romans, also very civilized, waged wars constantly.

And in our own history, we made heroes of men who killed one another with six-guns. Closer to our own time, we find the English, the French, and the Spanish fighting wars with one another nearly all the time. Poor people were killed for taking a rabbit or deer from a rich man's land. Others were burned alive as witches or hung and cut open with swords. And their laws were very cruel. Charles Dickens talks about children being hung for picking pockets only a hundred years ago.

I do not think we have more violence today than countries had in past years. Maybe it is a good thing that we worry about violence more now, even if there isn't more of it, because serious thinking about violence may help us avoid it in the future.